

## A STRAP FOR SAFETY

## Retired Northmont teacher's harness invention saves lives

Steve Heinrichs, 52, will run his family's business

By MARTHA HARDCASTLE  
For The Register-Guard

CLAYTON — May 29 was a mizzling day in the life of Steve Heinrichs. On that day, the Clayton resident observed his 20th birthday and celebrated a 30-year teaching career at Northmont High School in the physical education department.

Heinrichs will give Heinrichs time for his family business, M.A.S. Inc., which stands for movement and sports specialities. He will run the business with his wife, Karen. Heinrichs invented and developed two types of harnesses — one used in physical rehabilitation, and climbing, and the other a multifunctional tool that is used in confined space extractions.

He became far from days at Greenville High School, where he was a basketball and the manager of the basketball team. "I was this frail little guy," he said. He didn't reach his full height of a shade less than 6 feet until adulthood. His other interest was driving, and he looked into joining the driving team in college at Ohio State University, but he was told that his skills weren't sufficient for collegiate competition.

However, during coach Ron O'Brien's tenure in a different direction, he suggested that Heinrichs check out the school's gymnasium team. It was a fruitful suggestion, as Heinrichs took to gymnasastics and especially weight lifting, the luck to writer.

A teammate who was also on



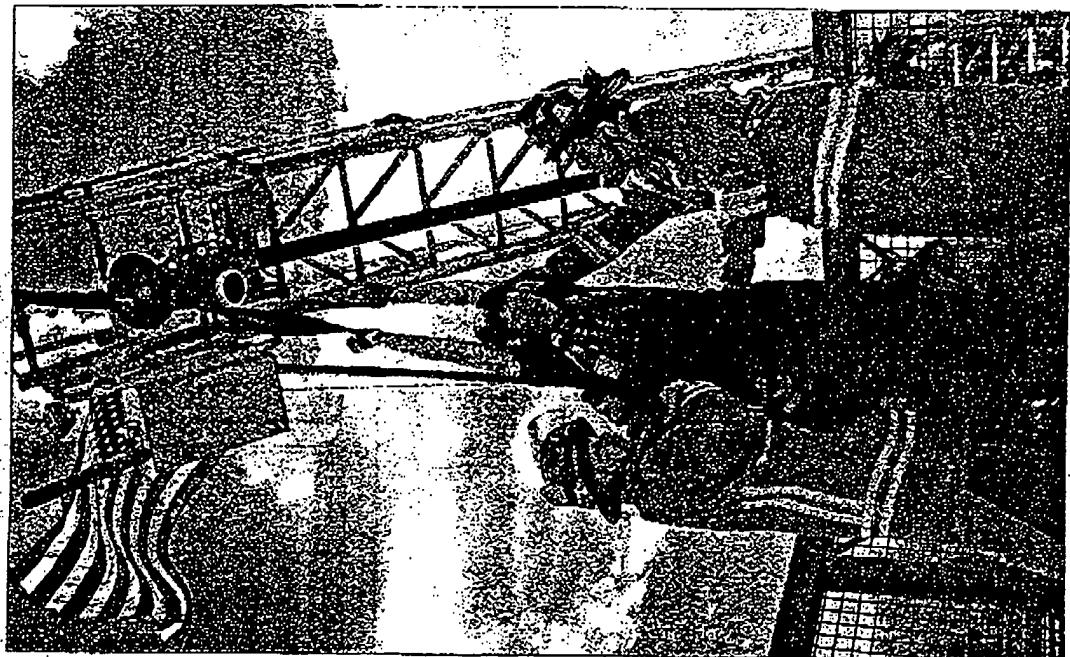
STEVE HEINRICHIS held his Englewood Fire Department Gasket Ray Call with a version of the M.A.S. strap he invented as a Balance aid, originally to teach his child to ride a bicycle.

The Ohio State Department of Education had started at the school encouraged him to try on, and Heinrichs dithered until his graduation in 1974. He also taught in prison for four years, and ran as soon as he started the 1974 school year, establishing Heinrichs was actually a gymnastics club for boys and founded by Northmont assistant principal Anthony DiCocco.

DiCocco had been Heinrichs high school physical education teacher at Greenville, and Northmont was looking for an instructor in movement and gymnasatics to round out its own physical education department. Sally Murphy, who was the department chair until her retirement in 1997, had a hand in the hire.

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Heinrichs said a gymnas-



ENGLEWOOD FIREFIGHTERS Robert Murphy (left) and Anthony Ferante (right) pull firefighter Call from a crawl space in a simulated rescue at the Englewood Fire Department's Training Center using the M.A.S. strap designed by Steve Heinrichs, a retired Northmont teacher.

## HARNESS

*Clayton may create life-saving device*

Continued from Page 1

patients on the harness, which is distributed by Sochiaw Occupational Therapy. The harnesses also are used by stroke patients, amputees and patients with other mobility issues.

"The biggest thing it does is to take away the fear of falling," he said. "It allows you to step out of the range of fear and into the zone of play."

He has also developed a second type of harness that is used for confined space extractions. It is tested at 11,000 pounds and can be used to extract bodies from small areas — even dead bodies, or people who are critically injured.

"There is a lot of military potential, too," Heinrichs said. "We have used it to pull Humvees out of a ditch."

The harness was used following the World Trade Center disaster in 2001 as an anchor strap for workers to rappel into confined areas to look for survivors.

It is being used by many fire departments, including Englewood, Union, Huber Heights, Pleasant Hill and Dayton.

As much as Heinrichs is looking to the future, he admitted that he will miss kids and colleagues

scrapping in at Northmont.

He will continue to coach the youth gymnastics team, which he started three years ago.

"I did went to state competition in 2002, two in 2003 and four this past year."

"Fortunately, next year we'll go to a birth," he said.

Heinrichs has received two

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